

FOR NPS USE ONLY

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

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SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

**1 NAME** Sheridan Plaza Hotel

HISTORIC

AND/OR COMMON

**2 LOCATION** 4601-13 North Sheridan Road and 930-936 West Wilson Avenue  
(Northwest corner)  
Chicago, Illinois (code:) 12 (CONG. DIST. ) 9 Cook (cont.) 031

STREET & NUMBER

CITY/TOWN Chicago VICINITY OF CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

STATE Illinois CODE 12 COUNTY Cook COOD 031

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
DISTINCT BUILDINGS	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	AGRICULTURE <input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDINGS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL <input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL <input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	<b>PUBLIC ACQUISITION</b>	<b>ACCESSIBLE</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input type="checkbox"/> YES RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER Apt. Hotel

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME Central National Bank of Chicago, Trust Number 23795  
(Sole beneficiary: Sheridan Plaza Associates, a partnership)

STREET & NUMBER 120 South LaSalle Street

CITY/TOWN Chicago VICINITY OF STATE Illinois

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC Recorder of Deeds, County of Cook (Tract Book No. 587D1)

STREET & NUMBER 120 North Clark Street

CITY/TOWN Chicago STATE Illinois

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE None

DATE

— FEDERAL — STATE — COUNTY — LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS

CITY/TOWN STATE

CONITION		CHECK ONE		CHECK ONE	
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE		
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED	DATE	
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED				

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Sheridan Plaza is a hotel or apartment hotel, of concrete construction throughout, faced with brick and terra cotta, occupying a rectangular site at the northeast corner of Wilson Avenue and Sheridan Road, fronting about 225 by 130 feet. It contains about 190,000 square feet exclusive of the basement. The southeast corner of the site is vacant. The rest of the site is covered by a two-story base containing lobby, desk, lounges, dining areas, shops and stores and facilities. Above this base are ten floors of rooms and suites, about 415 units in all, which form a reverse letter E in plan: an east-west section along the rear or alley edge of the site, and two north-south sections, one along the west or Sheridan Road edge and one near the middle of the site. A rendering in the Economist of Sept. 24, 1919, shows a third north-south wing at the east, which would have completed the E to an E, but the six-flat building which occupied the southeast corner of the site was not razed until much later and this wing was never built.

The first floor street fronts contain shop and restaurant spaces. The second floor fronts express the lounge and dining areas of the hotel. All this base is richly clothed in monochromatic white terra cotta, which is especially elaborate at the main entrance on Sheridan Road flanked by canopied niches and topped by a large shield held by chimeras. The two-story sections (lobby and banquet room) have barrel-vaulted ceilings expressed in cylindrical roofs. At the Wilson Avenue fronts large festooned urns are spaced along this roof line.

Face brick laid in common bond forms the primary facing of the upper elevations (except the alley wall which is common brick). Terra cotta panels and ornaments are used on these elevations to develop a secondary effect of slender towers at the north-west end of the site and at the south ends of the two north-south wings. A strong vertical emphasis is created using continuous terra cotta moldings on these "towers" while the walls between are left almost undecorated. The corners of these "towers" are marked at the top by winged gargoyles and at the bottom by large cartouches. The middle section of the west elevation is topped by another row of urns. At the eleventh floor, windows in the street elevations originally had little balustrades to give a suggestion of balconies.

The terra cotta details are eclectic and draw freely from many different periods and styles, as is typical of many of the elaborate terra cotta facades of this period in Chicago.

Several store fronts have been changed. Most of the balconies have been removed, and the roof line of the "towers" originally had a row of slender pinnacles or rockets which have been taken down. There is some other terra cotta damage but the exterior is generally in good condition and unaltered except for the shop fronts.

The most important and impressive interior feature is the lobby, a barrel-vaulted space about 34 by 58 feet and over two stories high, with rich plaster decoration. At its south end the lobby flows up to a second-floor lounge by way of a formal decorative stairway with a fountain. Access from the main (Sheridan) entrance is under another decorative stair leading to a lounge along the west front. Two large lounge or dining areas lie east of the lobby on the second floor. The rest of the base is shops, offices,

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and support areas. Some of the ornamental plaster in the lobby is badly damaged. All the interiors show considerable deterioration due to deferred maintenance, fire damage in 1974, and five years of vacancy.

# SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
PREHISTORIC	ARCHAEOLOGY PREHISTORIC	COMMUNITY PLANNING	LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	RELIGION
1400-1499	ARCHAEOLOGY HISTORIC	CONSERVATION	LAW	SCIENCE
1500-1599	AGRICULTURE	ECONOMICS	INTERNATIONAL	SCULPTURE
1600-1699	ARCHITECTURE	EDUCATION	MILITARY	SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
1700-1799	ART	ENGINEERING	MUSIC	THEATER
1800-1899	COMMERCE	EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	PHILOSOPHY	TRANSPARATION
X-1900	COMMUNICATIONS	INDUSTRY	POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	OTHER (SPECIFY)
		INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES      1919-1921      BUILDER/ARCHITECT      Walter W. Ahlechlager (Architect)

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Sheridan Plaza was the first big building in Uptown. It was planned in 1919, begun in 1920 and opened in 1921.

Chicago was built, except for its central area, as a prairie city of detached houses and two or three story apartment buildings. But as it grew larger and commuting and shopping patterns evolved, neighborhood entertainment and shopping centers began to sprout where streetcar and rapid-transit lines intersected or terminated. In the real estate boom of the 1920s several of these centers underwent explosive growth, none more than the area known as Uptown. While most outlying centers consisted of a single major crossing or a linear strip, Uptown expanded along the edges of an irregular quadrilateral, formed by Wilson Avenue, Sheridan Road, Lawrence Avenue, and Broadway. In this core area, covering less than one tenth of a square mile, there arose a unique combination of restaurants, theaters, ballrooms and night clubs, hotels and apartment hotels, shops, stores and offices. This included two 12-story hotels and two others of 10 and 8 stories; a 12 story bank and office building, an 8 story office building, the world famous Aragon Ballroom, and several motion picture theaters culminating in the Uptown Theater whichhen built (1925) was the world's largest.

In 1921, when the hotel opened, land at the Sheridan-Wilson corner was worth \$2500 per front foot. By 1925 it had reached \$6000 per front foot, the same as the nearby Wilson-Broadway corner. These were the two most valuable corners on the North side (i.e. north of Oak Street) and only the Englewood intersection of 63rd and Halsted was higher valued outside the central city.

Wilson Avenue's success as an entertainment center predates World War I. But of all the tall buildings, the Sheridan Plaza was the first. An aerial photo of the early twenties shows it looming over a neighborhood of three-story buildings. All the other high-rise hotels, apartments and office buildings in Uptown came later, most of them after 1925 when the boom accelerated.

The hotel was promoted on the basis of its convenience, facilities and staff. Express buses ran by on both streets; both elevated and Milwaukee Road trains stopped two blocks away; the famous Clarendon Beach was two blocks east. The manager was brought from the Greenbrier at White Sulphur Springs and the steward, chefs and maitre d'hotel were recruited from the Grand and the Sacher in Vienna, the Palace in San Francisco, and the Astor in New York among other famous places.

For decades the hotel was a leading venue for weddings, public and private dances, and other social events. It was the seasonal home of the Chicago Cubs and of all the baseball teams visiting the Cubs.

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In one other important respect this hotel is a landmark in the commercial development of Uptown. The three partners organized the Up-Town (sic) Business and Development Association, which evolved into the Uptown Chamber of Commerce, still the leading commercial association in the area.

Architecture is more than a fine art; it is also a business. Walter W. Ahlschlager was not only the designer of this 12-story, 400-plus-room bellwether of the Uptown boom; he was also co-owner and co-developer. Born in Chicago in 1887, locally schooled, he began as a draftsman in his father's small architectural office in 1914. His father died soon after. Even before 1920 Walter Ahlschlager had built several sizable buildings, including theaters and hotels, and was dealing in land for redevelopment.

He was a partner with real-estate operators Louis H. Stafford and W. C. D. Finkle in the land assembly for the Sheridan Plaza, and became the vice president of the Sheridan Plaza Hotel Corporation when it incorporated. In other cases he was to develop on his own.

Between 1918 and 1926, he built four of Chicago's largest motion-picture houses: the Pantheon on Sheridan near Wilson, the south-side Stratford, the west-side Belmont, and his masterpiece, the Belmont. In roughly the same period he also built several hotels and apartment towers in outlying neighborhoods: the Parkway and Webster on the mid-north side, the Sovereign in Rogers Park, the Jackson Towers in Hyde Park, and the famous Graemere at Garfield Park. In all these buildings, as in the Sheridan Plaza, his design work reveals considerable flair for drama and richness, even opulence.

Perhaps his most famous Chicago building is the 45-story Medinah Club on Michigan Avenue (now the Radisson Hotel), a distinguished example of the tower type and a fitting companion to the Tribune Tower. But Ahlschlager was not bounded by the Chicago city limits. This architect-entrepreneur went on to build a national practice. His son states that at one time Ahlschlager had the third largest practice in Chicago, after the large and famous firms of Graham Anderson Probst & White and Holabird & Root.

Briefly, among other projects, he built (and generally was a part owner or developer of) the Roxy in New York, the world's largest motion picture theater (60th street); the Carew Tower - Netherland Plaza complex in Cincinnati (a \$14 million project, including Ohio's then tallest building); a \$9-million downtown center in Wichita; and, among many projects in Dallas, a skyscraper Mercantile National Bank which he was able to complete in 1941-1943 despite the extraordinary difficulties of wartime construction, when materials bought and paid for were often taken back for priority use. Ahlschlager moved to Dallas in 1940 and lived there until his death in 1969.

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His theatrical and promotional flair is amply demonstrated by five plates in the American Architect of April 20, 1926, showing the reception room of his architectural office. This startling room appears to have a 25-foot ceiling and a walk-in fireplace, and indeed looks rather like the lobby of a good size movie house.

Walter Ahlischlager is an outstanding example of the architect-developer, with a national practice, operating in real estate with great boldness and great success. Uptown Chicago is a unique configuration of high-density commercial and residential development in an outlying section of an American city. The Sheridan Plaza, one of Ahlischlager's first big ventures, was the beginning of the construction boom of the twenties in Uptown and symbolizes the optimism, the energies and the lifestyle of Uptown, Chicago and America.

# MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

- The Economist (Chicago) Special News Bulletin, Sept. 24, 1919;  
 Sheridan Plaza Hotel. Also, 1919, p. 633; 1920 p. 157; 1921 p. 996.  
 Chicago Sunday Tribune, April 3, 10, 17 and 24, 1921.  
 Illinois Society of Architects Handbook, 1923, p. 66.  
 The Ontra Magazine, November 1924 (Chicago Historical Society).  
 City of Chicago, Department of Buildings, permit records.

# GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 0.67

UTM REFERENCES

A	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING	B	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C				D			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Lots 1 and 2 (except from each of said lots the West 7 feet thereof taken for widening Sheffield Avenue) and all of Lots 3 and 4 in Eddy's Subdivision of the South 10 rods of the North 80 rods of the East 1/2 of the Northeast 1/4 of Section 17 (except the North 8 feet thereof) together with that part of Section 16, lying East of and adjoining said rods, all in Township 40 North, Range 14 East of the third principal meridian in Cook County, Illinois.

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

# FORM PREPARED BY

NAME TITLE Martin C. Farnham, 4636 Magnolia, Chicago 60640, (312) 878-7118  
 on behalf of: David S. Kirk

ORGANIZATION Boston Financial Technology Group, Inc. DATE July 24, 1980

STREET & NUMBER 70 Federal Street TELEPHONE (617) 482-9790

CITY OR TOWN Boston STATE Mass. ZIP 02110

# STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS

NATIONAL \_\_\_\_\_ STATE \_\_\_\_\_ LOCAL \_\_\_\_\_

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665) I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

TITLE

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

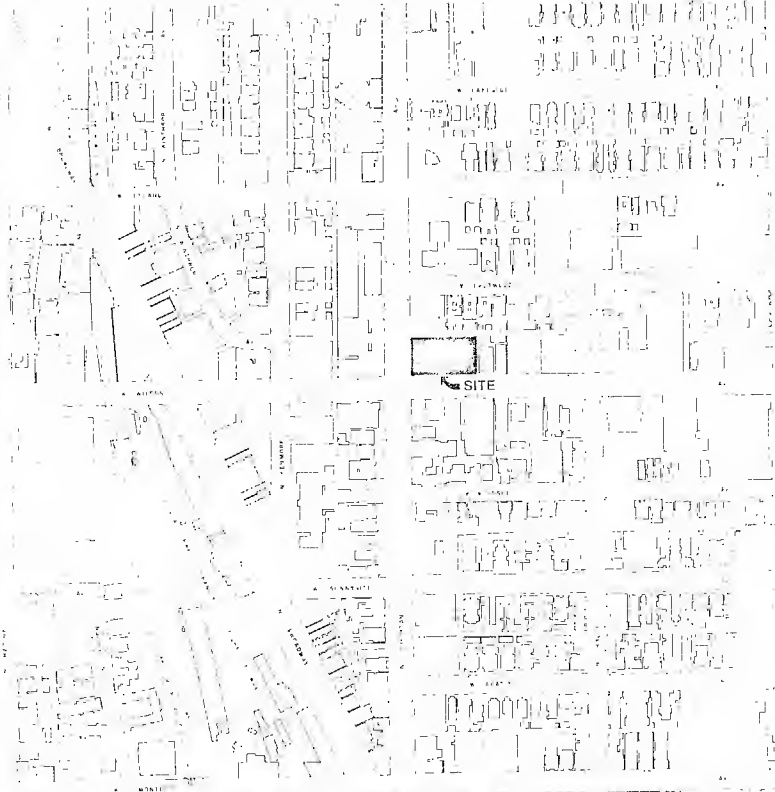
ATTENTION

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER







VICINITY MAP

**SHERIDAN PLAZA APARTMENTS**  
4601 N. SHERIDAN RD. CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

ENTRIES IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

STATE ILLINOIS

Date Entered NOV 21 1981

<u>Name</u>	<u>Location</u>
Madison Theatre	Peoria Peoria County
Ardmore Avenue Train Station	Villa Park DuPage County
Dunlap Mansion	Chicago Cook County
Sheridan Plaza Hotel	Chicago Cook County

Also Notified

Honorable Charles H. Percy  
Honorable Adlai E. Stevenson  
Honorable Robert H. Michel  
Honorable John N. Erlenborn  
Honorable Sidney R. Yates

OFFICE OF CONGRESSIONAL RELATIONS

For further information, please call the National Register at (202) 343-6401.